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ABSTRACT

This issue of "Mini-School News" deals with the first 12 steps involved in starting a minischool. The first and most critical step is to clearly identify the problems that make reform seem necessary. The question then becomes one of identifying the possible solutions and sources of information about them. Then the data must be evaluated from a number of vantage points. The process of reaching a decision to adopt a reform or series of reforms for a school is the fourth step. Most schools will have to turn to higher authority for permission to proceed and, where necessary, additional resources necessary to support the planning process. The process of planning for school reform requires machinery--an organization to which is delegated the responsibility for developing the plan and that has formal status. It is the job of the planning group to look at the overall objective in terms of the problems identified in Step 1. It then is necessary to translate the results into a written document. Adoption of the completed plan, the ninth step, is a three stage process: acceptance by the school community, revision where necessary to insure community acceptance, and only then submission to and approval by higher authorities. The tenth step is implementing the plan. Change must be institutionalized and an evaluation process organized. (Author/JM)

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"How do you start a mini-school?"

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Well, it's all in here. At least, the first 12 steps. This issue of MSN and the next will deal entirely with just that one question: How do you start a mini-school. Or several? Or a complex of them?

We owe the completed contents of this issue and the February issue to James J. Mezzacco, a New York-based freelance writer, who also provided us with material for the MSN "Waivers" issue (October '74).

As you'll find out as you go through this, Mezzacco's forthcoming book will be must reading for everyone.

Restructuring Your School: A Handbook

The restructuring of a school to accommodate new programs and new teaching methods is at best a difficult process; the possibilities for error are legion. To help educators and others involved in future school reform to succeed and to avoid the pitfalls along the way, the following is offered as a how-to-do-it guide, based largely on the experience of the New York Urban Coalition Education Program and, to a limited extent, on what is known about experiences with other reform programs.

In putting together this handbook, the author and his sources do not suggest that they have learned everything there is to be known about the process of school change. The answers are not all in. And, just as existing mini-schools and mini-school complexes continue to undergo changes as structures, so will the processes of effecting change be altered as experience produces new knowledge and insights.

The handbook is designed specifically for those interested in adopting the mini-school pattern as their answer to school reform. At the same time, however, it should be of interest and value to those exploring other avenues for the restructuring of their schools.

Finally, the handbook is premised on the conviction of its developers, the author and the staff of the Urban Coalition's Education Program that piecemeal approaches to school reform ultimately are destined for failure. Only comprehensive reform, involving the total replanning and restructuring of the school (e.g., conversion of a traditional school structure into a mini-school complex) is likely to succeed. And it is only such comprehensive approaches to reform that are advocated here.

Identifying Your Problems

1

Educating Yourself

2

Analyzing the Data

3

Reaching the Decision

4

Getting the Green Light

5

Initiating the Planning Process

6

Setting Your Objectives

7

The Written Plan

8

Adopting the Plan

9

Implementing the Plan

10

Institutionalising Change

11

Evaluating Progress

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What We Do